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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 13 February 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I wish to inform you of some of the most important measures to deliver humanitarian aid that have been taken by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic between December 2013 and today, 13 February 2014.

I. From the beginning of January to 12 February 2014, a total of seven United Nations humanitarian aid convoys have been deployed to Aleppo, Ghizlaniyah, Jadidat al-Shaybani, Kiswah, Barzah town, Sabburah and Bludan in Rif Dimashq

II. Humanitarian activities carried out in Yarmuk camp, the old city of Homs, Barzah and Mu'addamiyah

(a) Yarmuk camp

– Since 30 January 2013, with the support and protection of the Syrian Government, the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees has worked with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to deliver aid to families in Yarmuk camp, which is surrounded by terrorist groups. Work is ongoing, and the following humanitarian operations have been carried out between 30 January and 13 February 2014:

- 7,100 food parcels have been delivered, in addition to bread, dates and milk for children.
- 2,586 civilians in a serious medical condition have been evacuated along with their close relatives, as have a number of male and female pupils.

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– Distribution was interrupted for a day on 8 February 2014 owing to intimidation, gunfire and sniping from armed terrorist groups, which began on the evening of 7 February. A female victim was evacuated from the camp.

– The Syrian Government expects that the Palestinian movements will be successful in their endeavour to remove armed terrorist groups from the camp and prepare for the return of normal life.

(b) The old city of Homs

In accordance with the agreement concluded between the governor of Homs and the Resident Coordinator of United Nations activities in Syria, the authorities in the governorate have, since 7 February 2014, been cooperating with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the United Nations working group (comprising the office of the Resident Coordinator, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration) to carry out the following humanitarian work. The truce has, for the second time, been extended for another three days as of 13 February 2014.

- 1,400 civilians, including over 80 children, have been evacuated and given swift medical attention. Emergency medical and nutritional assistance was immediately provided.
- The evacuees have been taken to their chosen new places of residence, including Wa'r, Karm al-Shami, Insha' at, the Ghutah, Mukhayyam, Shammas, the Damascus Road area, Dablan and the areas of the Birr and Razi hospitals.
- 134 civilians have been given temporary places of residence.
- 70 young men who do not have Syrian blood on their hands have had their situation regularized.
- On 8 February, emergency supplies were brought into the old city of Homs. The supplies comprised 500 food packages including flour, cooking oil, 190 health packages, 30 containers of water purifiers, medication for chronic diseases and vaccinations. The aid convoy was shelled, and two trucks were forced to turn back to their departure point after coming under fire from armed terrorist groups. Once the gunfire had ended, it was decided that the remainder of the convoy would continue into the old city of Homs, where it was again shelled by the groups. The trucks were damaged and unable to continue, and a driver was injured. A decision was therefore taken to withdraw from the area in view of the present danger.

(c) Barzah area

From 1 to 10 February 2014, the following aid materials were brought into the area after security was restored:

- 13,800 aid packages, 2,000 jerry cans of water, plastic sheets and 1,250 cookers.
- 10,350 blankets, 200 wheelchairs and 1,750 health and sanitation packages.

The competent authorities are working to improve the basic infrastructure and restore all services to the area.

(d) Mu'addamiyah area

Over the last 10 days, UNHCR and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent have evacuated 10,000 civilians from Mu'addamiyah in several waves. An agreement for reconciliation and the return of security in the city has now entered into force and, as of 4 February 2014, hundreds of civilian families have started returning to Mu'addamiyah. Technical teams are currently working to repair basic infrastructure and ensure that all health, educational and other services return to Mu'addamiyah.

III. Aid distribution activities

– Acting through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and local civil society, the World Food Programme has distributed the following items:

  • In December 2013, 763,510 food packets were distributed to all governorates except Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah. One packet is sufficient for a family of five.

  • In January 2014, 3,670,835 food rations were distributed to all governorates except Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah. Hasakah governorate received only 3,990 rations, one of the smallest totals, because terrorist groups prevented aid delivery by land. Aircraft laden with food aid made 13 flights between Arbil and Qamishli in order to deliver food aid to some 26,000 people. On 4 February 2014, the World Food Programme set up an air bridge and made dozens of flights from Arbil to Qamishli in order to provide for the needs of 30,000 civilians. A second phase is currently being implemented, with 11 additional flights from Arbil airport to Qamishli airport, at a rate of one daily flight from 14 to 26 February 2014.

That measure does not, however, address the problem posed by armed terrorist groups cutting off land routes and preventing United Nations convoys from reaching Hasakah governorate.

– In cooperation with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, the Ministry of Health carried out a third polio vaccination campaign from 1 to 6 February. The objective was to reach 2.2 million children across Syria as part of six vaccination campaigns at monthly intervals. The Ministry announced the campaigns after several cases of polio of foreign origin were discovered in Syria. The first campaign, which took place on 16 January, reached 1,772,000 children under 5. The greatest numbers of vaccinations took place in Dayr al-Zawr (294,000), Hamah (169,000) and Hasakah (247,000). Vaccinations have also taken place in areas where there is a terrorist presence, such as Duma. In the course of the campaigns, several workers and volunteers have been abducted or killed.

– UNRWA announced on 5 February 2014 that it has begun a polio vaccination in the Yarmuk camp. 10,000 vaccines have been successfully delivered.

– In January 2014, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent was unable to deliver food aid to the governorates of Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqah, Hasakah and Idlib and the Aleppo countryside owing to terrorist roadblocks.

– In January 2014, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in cooperation with international organizations was able to deliver food and other aid to the

governorates of Rif Dimashq, Qunaytirah, Dar'a and Hamah, and parts of Aleppo governorate.

– Armed terrorist groups continue to besiege the villages of Nubl and Zahra' in the Aleppo countryside, Fu'ah and Kafraya in the Idlib countryside, and the industrial city of Adra in Rif Dimashq. For several months, civilians in those areas have been denied access to food, medicine and other aid. There has been no tangible reaction, and international organizations have not exercised genuine pressure to solve the problem and bring aid to over 150,000 civilians who are under a blockade from armed terrorist groups.

Lastly, the fact that aid has recently been delivered with United Nations cooperation to the old city of Homs, Barzah, Ghizlaniyah, Jadidat al-Shaybani and Yarmuk camp is the clearest evidence that, whenever possible, the Syrian Government has spared no effort and stands prepared to facilitate humanitarian aid delivery all over Syria without discrimination.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mazen **Adi**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.